

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 128

By Henry

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of William Dortch Oldham of Nashville.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of William Dortch Oldham; and

WHEREAS, Dortch Oldham was an exemplary businessman who worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Oldham became the President and majority owner of the Southwestern Company, a direct sales concern that has been putting college students to work selling Bibles and educational materials for decades; and

WHEREAS, in continuous operation since 1885 and headquartered in Nashville, the Southwestern Company has provided far more than simply summer jobs to its young salespeople; it has also taught them the business and sales skills that have allowed so many young men and women to become exceptional leaders; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Oldham will be fondly remembered by many of his “book boys” for the mentoring they received from him during their jobs with Southwestern; and

WHEREAS, born August 26, 1919, in Pleasant Shade, Dortch Oldham was the son of N. E. and Sally Oldham; and

WHEREAS, having heard that a young man could sell Bibles door-to-door for the Southwestern Company, Mr. Oldham left his parents’ farm at the age of sixteen and hitchhiked to Nashville with just a few dollars to his name; and

WHEREAS, not many years after his arrival in Nashville, Dortch Oldham, like so many of the Greatest Generation, rendered sterling service in the United States Military during World War II; and

WHEREAS, in the early 1960s, after many years with Southwestern during which he demonstrated peerless business acumen and determined leadership, Mr. Oldham assumed the commanding heights of that company; during his tenure as President and majority owner, the Southwestern Company raised its sale force to more than five thousand people; and

WHEREAS, having established a reputation as a leader among local businessmen, Dortch Oldham advised the boards of several local businesses, including Willis Coroon and First American; and

WHEREAS, as one of Tennessee's finest, Dortch Oldham met and greeted every one of the U.S. Presidents from Lyndon B. Johnson to George H. W. Bush; and

WHEREAS, a dedicated Republican, Dortch Oldham served the state party as its Chairman and, in 1974, he ran for the office of Governor; and

WHEREAS, in 1982, President Ronald Reagan selected Mr. Oldham to serve as the highest-ranking U.S. official at the World's Fair in Knoxville; in that capacity, Mr. Oldham was responsible for greeting hundreds of international dignitaries; and

WHEREAS, a staunch supporter of formal education, Mr. Oldham contributed his significant talents to the University of Richmond and Montgomery Bell Academy, serving as a Trustee at each of those institutions; and

WHEREAS, at both the University of Richmond and the University of Tennessee, Mr. Oldham established the Oldham Scholars Program, which provides financial assistance to students who might not otherwise be able to afford the cost of their college educations; and

WHEREAS, a member of numerous civic and charitable associations, Mr. Oldham served as President of the Nashville Chamber of Commerce and chaired the boards of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and the Salvation Army; he also belonged to the Downtown Rotary Club for over fifty years; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Oldham revelled in the heat of competition; he loved golf and a good game of gin at the Belle Meade Country Club, and he could pick stocks with an uncanny ability; and

WHEREAS, Dortch Oldham was an active and devout member of the Westminster Presbyterian Church, which he served faithfully for many years as an Elder; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Oldham was also deeply devoted to his family, and he always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; and

WHEREAS, Dortch Oldham enjoyed the loving companionship of his wife of over sixty years, Lenore Huebner Oldham, who survives him; and

WHEREAS, he will be sorely missed by his five sons and their wives: Dortch and Carol, Greg and Anne, Peter and Kim, Danny and Laurie, and Mark and Sharon; and

WHEREAS, he is also survived by three sisters and two brothers-in-law, Esther Rogers, Jessie and Dump Jernigan, and Annette and Harold Glover; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Oldham will be sorely missed by his thirteen grandchildren and their spouses, Skye Birmingham, Daniel (Natalie) Riley, Andrea (Brett) Mohr, Drew Oldham, Hall Felker, Allison Oldham, Liz Felker, Ben Oldham, Houston Oldham, Sam Oldham, Lane Felker, Rachel Oldham, and Will Oldham; and

WHEREAS, in addition to his parents, Dortch Oldham was preceded in death by three siblings, Max Oldham, Forrest Oldham, and Esbel Williams; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Oldham leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life, and diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of William Dortch Oldham, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Mr. Oldham.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.